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THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNITED STATES ON THE OPENING OF THE AMAZON TO THE WORLD'S COMMERCE¹

It is one of the minor anomalies of history that from the date of its discovery by Pinzon, in 1500, down to almost exactly the middle of the nineteenth century the great Amazon Valley remained virtually a sealed book to the world. It is quite true that a number of spectacular explorations of the river and certain of its tributaries were made during this period. The famous journey of Orellana, in 1541, and that of La Condamine, in 1744, are cases in point. Nor must the heroic labors of the Jesuit fathers, headed by the intrepid Vieira, which in the sixteenth century peopled the great valley with a chain of missions, be forgotten. But these events, however significant in the history of geographical discovery and missionary endeavor, aroused but little popular interest outside of Brazil and Portugal and, above all, furnished but slight impetus to increased commercial and economic development of the Amazon's virgin resources.

Yet potentially the Amazon region is one of the richest of the globe. The entire river system drains an area of some 2,722,000 square miles, or over twice the estimated drainage region of the Mississippi and its tributaries. The main river, after rising in the remote Andean plateau not far from the Pacific, flows across Peru and Brazil a distance of some 4,000 miles through a country enormously rich in natural resources, and is navigable for ocean steamships for a distance of 2,300 miles from its mouth to Iquitos, the great rubber mart of Peru. Important tributaries also drain the hinterland of the republics of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Yet, even at the present day, the entire valley of the Brazilian Amazon according to the census of 1900

¹ Read before the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association in Berkeley, California, in 1917, and by title before the American Historical Association, at Philadelphia, December 29, 1917.

supports a population of less than three quarters of a million, an increase, however, of over 100 per cent since 1850.

Moreover, the economic development has scarcely kept pace with the growth of population, and today, with the sole exception of the rubber industry, not a tithe of the vast natural resources of this region is either known or utilized.

During a period close upon three centuries, the exploitation of the resources of the Amazon basin had not engaged the attention of either Europe or the United States. This almost complete neglect by the outside world was due in part to the jealously exclusive policy of Brazil—a legacy of the Portuguese colonial system—and in part to the late beginnings of steam navigation in the inland waters of South America.² It is a significant, though little known, fact that the influence of the United States and certain of its citizens was the determining factor in inducing the Imperial Government of Brazil to abandon this policy of seclusion and unlock the door of the Amazon to the world's commerce. It is the purpose of this paper to point out briefly the pressure exerted by the United States, with the subsequent reaction on Brazilian politics, which led to this consummation.

The first intimation of any official interest on the part of the United States Government in the opening of the Amazon came in 1850. On May 8 of that year, Secretary of State Clayton wrote to the Secretary of the Navy a letter in which he stated that the Department of State “had for some time past had in contemplation certain measures for procuring for the citizens of the United States the navigation of the river Amazon and some of its tributaries”. He requested that a ship of war be sent to explore the river; if a special permit from the Brazilian Government were considered necessary Mr. Clayton believed it could be secured through the efforts of the American minister at Rio de Janeiro.³

² Decree no. 1037 of August 30, 1852, granted Ireneo Evangelista de Souza (later Visconde de Maua) exclusive privilege of the navigation of the Amazon for a period of thirty years. The result was the organization of the “Amazon Steam Navigation Company.” *Rev. Trim. do Inst. Hist.*, LXII. (1899).

³ *British and Foreign State Papers*, XLII. 1313.

Just what reasons induced the United States Government to abandon this project we do not know. In the light of subsequent negotiations, however, it seems reasonably clear that all overtures from Washington looking to the opening of the Amazon at this time were balked on the part of the Brazilian Government by a flat *non possumus*. Fear of possible foreign complications combined with the traditional policy of commercial exclusion made the foreign office of Rio de Janeiro extremely reluctant to consider the navigation of the Amazon a subject of international concern.

The Navy Department now adopted another plan and one, as events proved, fraught with important consequences. On February 15, 1851, Lieutenants Herndon and Gibbon of the United States Navy received instructions from Washington to cross the Andes from Peru and, after traversing the highlands of Peru and Bolivia, to explore the Amazon and its great tributary the Madeira. Lieutenant Herndon was expected to descend the Marañon and the Amazon as far as Pará, paying particular attention to the potential resources of the Amazon Valley and the feasibility of communication between the United States and the rich mining districts of Upper Peru, while Lieutenant Gibbon was commissioned to cross Bolivia and descend the Madeira to its confluence with the Amazon. They were furnished with adequate funds and scientific equipment and, during the course of the year 1851, the work of both of these intrepid men was thoroughly and conscientiously carried through. The results of this pioneer labor of American explorers were published in 1853 and 1854 and exercised a powerful, if indirect, influence on the subsequent opening of the Amazon to the world's commerce.

In the meantime, however, American diplomacy had not been idle. Realizing the futility of attempting at this time to gain concessions from Brazil the State Department resolved on a flank attack. On July 26, 1851, not long after Lieutenant Herndon had set out from Lima, the American minister to Peru, Mr. J. Randolph Clay, negotiated a treaty guaranteeing to the United States full use of the Peruvian section of the Amazon under the most favored nation clause.⁴

⁴ Eugene Schuyler, *American Diplomacy* (New York, 1895), p. 329.

Unfortunately, this good beginning was followed by no permanent results, owing to the determined and successful opposition of Brazil. Alarmed at the new turn of events, and convinced that the Andean Republic was being made the unconscious instrument of an American attack on Brazilian interests in the Amazon basin, the Imperial Government hastened to bring pressure on Peru. As soon as the Herndon and Gibbon expedition was known at Rio, a special envoy, Da Ponte Ribeyro, was sent to Lima to negotiate a treaty "by which the citizens of the United States should be excluded from all participation in the navigation of the Amazon and in the trade in the interior of South America". In pursuance of this plan a treaty was signed between Peru and Brazil, October 23, 1851, which provided that the navigation of the river "should belong exclusively to the representative states owning its banks". This new treaty practically nullified all that the United States had obtained by the previous negotiation.⁵

It does not fall within the scope of this paper to follow the tortuous path of the diplomatic negotiations centering about these or subsequent treaties. In spite of a second treaty, April 15, 1853, obtained through the energetic endeavors of Mr. Clay, Brazilian intrigue again proved too strong. A second Peruvian-Brazilian treaty, negotiated January 4, 1854, definitely nullified concessions given to the United States by Peru by restricting the use of the Amazon to Peruvian and Brazilian ships.

On the other hand, the Republic of Bolivia, the commerce of whose hinterland was directly dependent on the Madeira, the Amazon's greatest tributary, eagerly embraced the suggestion of the United States. On April 15, 1853, and again on May 13, 1858, her government issued decrees offering free navigation of all her rivers to all nations, and invited the United States to use any parts of the Amazon belonging to her. But neither these overtures nor the favor with which several other Hispanic American states viewed the prospective change, influenced Brazil, who still was bent on her old policy of restriction.⁶

⁵ Moore, *Digest of International Law*, I. 641.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I. 643-644.

In justice to Brazil, however, it must be conceded that she had some grounds for assuming this intransigent attitude. The resources and marvels of the Amazon basin and the problem of the free navigation of Brazil's greatest river had almost overnight become a subject of intense, almost passionate interest in the United States and only to a less extent in Europe. The report of Lieutenant Herndon was submitted to Congress, January 26, 1853, and soon afterward obtained wide circulation throughout the country.⁷ On no one did this account, extremely optimistic and roseate in character as it was, exercise a stronger influence than on Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury, an officer of the United States Navy and at that time superintendent of the hydrographical office and astronomer at the naval observatory at Washington. So impressed in fact was Lieutenant Maury by Herndon's report that he succeeded in calling together a convention at Memphis, Tennessee, June 7, 1853, where the question of the opening of the Amazon to the world's commerce was the subject of a heated and even polemical discussion. The result was a memorial, drawn up by Lieutenant Maury and submitted to the United States Congress March 3, 1854, petitioning the Government for an early and decisive consideration of the Amazon question.⁸

This memorial is an extraordinary document, one which we should hardly have expected from a man whom Alexander von Humboldt styled the founder of a new and important science, a man honored by the foremost scientific academies of the world, and generally regarded as the leading hydrographer of his time. As a matter of fact, however, Maury seems to have lost all perspective or sense of proportion whenever he broached the subject of the Amazon. His Memphis memorial goes so far as to borrow the phraseology of the Declaration of Independence in its pompous annunciation of the rights of the world to the glorious Amazon region. His ideas as to its size, wealth, and climate were exaggerated to the point of being fantastic. The Amazon became a second Eden, without which man could never attain

⁷ *House Doc.* no. 43, 32d cong., 2d sess.

⁸ Text given in *House Misc. Docs.*, no. 22, 33d cong., 1st sess.

his earthly goal. To him the opening of the river seemed absolutely essential to the well-being and prosperity of the United States, and in fact all North America. The flora and fauna were so rich and attractive that they vied with the jewels of the valley for supremacy. Moreover, these riches would be especially beneficial to the United States as, from his calculations, all sailing vessels, because of the set of the winds and currents, must, in making the mouth of the Amazon, pass the offings of our southern ports. Most optimistic hopes of the future of the Amazon Valley seethed in his mind, for, he reasoned, were the population of this region equal in density to that of Belgium, it would be capable of supporting 601,660,000 inhabitants.

The La Plata basin had already been opened, he further pointed out—in fact, he held that it had been forced open by Brazil in order to detract attention from the fabulous riches of the Amazon—and now Brazil should act in a consistent manner and open up waterways to the commerce of the world. But whether Brazil agreed or no, the free navigation of the Amazon must be obtained, “peaceably if we can—forcibly if we must”.

These are the main points of this extraordinary outburst of chauvinistic sentiment. What effect it would have upon the imagination of the Brazilian people, and still more upon their suspicions, may easily be conjectured. But Maury did not stop here with his propaganda. Before the memorial was reported upon in Congress, in fact, before it had been submitted to that body at all, the nimble-minded lieutenant undertook a series of expository letters in the *National Intelligencer* and *Union*, newspapers of Washington, writing under the pseudonym of “Inca”.⁹ All the exaggerated data of the Memphis memorial are repeated here with certain additions. Maury spoke sneeringly of the “Japanese policy” of Brazil, and quoted with great indignation the assertion of a Brazilian newspaper that “this nation of pirates, [*i.e.*, the United States] like those of their race, wish to displace

⁹ The letters appeared at irregular intervals during the early part of 1853, and later in the year, were published in pamphlet form in London with the title *Letters on the Amazon and Atlantic Slopes of South America*, by Inca. This collection, a copy of which is to be found in the British Museum, was used in the preparation of this paper.

all the people of America who are not Anglo-Saxon''. Though the peaceful intent of the United States was asserted and reasserted by Maury, even this feeling of peace and good-will toward Brazil must give way to "the everlasting principle of right". The letters concluded with the whole gist of Maury's argument given in one striking paragraph, which may be quoted in its entirety.

We want nothing exclusive up the Amazon: but we are nearest the Amazon, or rather to the mouth of it, than any other nation, not even excluding Brazil herself, if we count the distance in time and measure from Rio de Janeiro and from New York or New Orleans as the centers of the two countries. And therefore it may well be imagined that the execrable policy by which Brazil has kept shut up, and is continuing to keep shut up, from man's—from Christian, civilized, enlightened man's—use the fairest portion of God's earth, will be considered by the American people as a nuisance, not to say an outrage, . . . This certainly is the question of the day. The problem of the age is that of the free navigation of the Amazon and the settlement of the Atlantic slope of South America. It is to draw after it consequences of the greatest importance, results of the greatest magnitude. It is to stand out in after times, and among all the great things which this generation has already accomplished, as *the* achievement in its way of the nineteenth century. The time will come when the free navigation of the Amazon will be considered by the people of this country as second in importance, by reason of its conservative effects, to the acquisition of Louisiana, if it be second at all; for I believe it is to form the safety valve of the Union.

Extracts from these letters were published in a Portuguese translation during the course of the year 1853 in the widely circulated *Correio Mercantil* of Rio de Janeiro. The effect of their arrogant and aggressive tone, as well as their gratuitous assumption that the free navigation was already practically accomplished, may readily be imagined. Those Brazilians who had regarded the United States with something akin to fear and dislike now found their worst suspicions confirmed. In many quarters the conviction began to gain ground that the United States harbored sinister designs on certain countries of South America, a conviction which the outcome of the recently con-

cluded Mexican War, our filibustering expeditions to Cuba and Central America and the bombardment of Greytown served to reënforce. It was assumed that once American citizens had established themselves in the southern continent they would introduce their own institutions, insist on self-government, and eventually demand annexation to the United States. As indicative of this attitude was the pamphlet of Sr. Cavalcanti, the Brazilian minister to Peru, published late in 1853.¹⁰ It was couched in violent, even abusive, terms, and attributed to the United States schemes of annexation as the real reason for its insistence on the opening of the Amazon. A little later the French writer, Reybaud, in *Le Brésil*,¹¹ a work liberally subsidized by the Brazilian Government and presumably representing the attitude of the Brazilian foreign office, roundly asserted that no vital interest was involved in the opening of the Amazon. He likewise declared that the American Government desired nothing more than to be forced by public opinion to use its unscrupulous power in aggressions upon Brazil. The projects launched by Maury were characterized as "fables out of the Thousand and One Nights", and the Memphis Convention as a cut and dried political manoeuvre to excite the populace. The Uruguayan writer, De Angelis, in a work published at Montevideo in 1854, *De la Navigation de l'Amazon*, made a bitter attack upon both Maury and the United States Government. Perhaps equally significant is the testimony of Fletcher and Kidder, two contemporary Americans, whose work, *Brazil and the Brazilians*, is on the whole the most authoritative work ever printed in English on Brazil.¹² Apropos of the letters and propaganda of Lieutenant Maury they wrote:

It is certainly a matter of deep regret that one whose writings and scientific investigations have not only received the highest encomiums from the great and the learned on both continents, but have blessed and are blessing the world, should have permitted himself to make

¹⁰ Schuyler, p. 333.

¹¹ Paris, 1856.

¹² The first edition was published in New York, in 1857.

use of language which could only inflame a sensitive nation, and of some arguments which can only tend to "filibustering." If Lieut. Maury had left out the offensive language, and a portion of his reasoning, which has been by Brazilians legitimately construed as nothing less than advocacy of the theory that might makes right, I believe that it would have been much better for our country and for Brazil. Since that time it has been impossible to negotiate a treaty with Brazil,—a government with which we ought to be closely linked.¹³

Others of Maury's countrymen had evidently shared these views, for his memorial to Congress was quietly laid upon the table, with some comment, to be sure, on the "selfish policy" of Brazil and the proviso that Congress might act in the future; but for the present, "considering the advisability of continued good relations with the Brazilian Empire", further action was deemed inexpedient.¹⁴

This rejection of Lieutenant Maury's memorial did not mean, however, that efforts to obtain the relaxation by Brazil of her really one-sided policy ceased. President Pierce mentioned the Amazon question in his annual message of December 5, 1853, stressed the importance of the opening of the river, and expressed his hope for a speedy solution of the diplomatic problems involved. Our minister to Brazil was especially instructed to obtain a change of Brazil's policy though no threat or hint of aggression was to be employed. The fact that President Pierce considered the question as worthy of rather extended comment in his message proves the hold that the great river had taken of the minds of the American people.¹⁵

Mr. Marcy, who succeeded Mr. Clayton as Secretary of State in the Spring of 1853, reopened the Amazon question with vigor. With Marcy's endeavors we enter upon a saner phase of the movement for the opening of the Amazon. Realizing that negotiations with the Andean republics would necessarily remain futile without the sanction of Brazil, he directed his efforts towards inducing the Imperial Government to modify its previ-

¹³ Fletcher and Kidder, *Brazil and the Brazilians*, (Philadelphia, 1857), p. 579.

¹⁴ *Report*, no. 95, 33d cong., 2d sess., p. 9.

¹⁵ Moore, *Digest of International Law*, I. 642.

ous attitude. Our State Department took the broad ground of international law, equity, and the desirability of strengthening the cordial relations between the Brazilian and American people. Thus, in a note to Mr. Trousdale, minister to Brazil, August 8, 1853, Mr. Marcy gave a definite basis to the claims of the United States by quoting from Wheaton's *Elements of International Law* the following passage:

Things of which the use is inexhaustible, such as the sea and running water (including, of course, navigable streams) cannot be so appropriated as to exclude others from using those elements in any manner which does not occasion a loss or inconvenience to the proprietor. This is what is called an *innocent use*. Thus we have seen that the jurisdiction possessed by one nation over sounds, straits, and other arms of the sea leading through its own territory to that of another, or to other seas common to all nations, does not exclude others from the right of innocent passage through these communications.¹⁶

Here at last was something tangible upon which to base the demand that Brazil open her interior waterways to the commerce of the world, in the accepted principles of international law current at that time.

Mr. Marcy had a definite working basis in this quotation from Wheaton, and set about the attainment of his object with considerable vigor. Our minister to Brazil was assured that the most important part of his mission was to secure for the United States the free use of the Amazon. Letters were also sent to our ministers in New Granada, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, urging them to keep the question before those governments, some of which had already viewed it with favor. Marcy was firm in his assurances that the United States was claiming only the same privilege that had been arranged for in Europe in 1815, at the Congress of Vienna. Furthermore, although he was guilty on occasion of using language which was virtually a threat, his attitude was on the whole a welcome contrast to Lieutenant Maury's purblind fervor.

His efforts may not have amended matters to any great extent, but they at least made them no worse. He conscientiously re-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I. 642.

fused to countenance any "adventurous infringement" of Brazil's claims, and absolutely refused to support an American citizen wishing to send a ship to Peru *via* the Amazon.¹⁷

The efforts of the Secretary of State were, however, for the time being futile. Public opinion in Brazil was too much aroused to admit of any compromise at all with the United States; in fact, diplomatic negotiations had reached a virtual deadlock as soon as Maury's writings had been published and digested in Brazil. The field of interest then shifts to the latter country, and we come to an examination of the events there which led to the final opening of the Amazon. Though in some respects the most interesting phase of the entire Amazon controversy, it has up to the present time not received an attention commensurate with its importance, partly because the literature on the subject is practically unknown outside of Brazil.

In the final instance the propaganda in favor of the opening of the Amazon to the world's commerce was largely inspired and guided by a single individual, the distinguished Brazilian statesman and publicist, Tavares Bastos. Long interested in a project for improving the commercial relations between the United States and Brazil, he had secured a copy of the reports of Herndon and Gibbon and had read with great avidity the memorial and letters of Maury published, as we have seen, in the *Correio Mercantil*. The influence of the writings of these three Americans, particularly those of Lieutenant Maury, were destined to become for the next decade the decisive factor in his public career.¹⁸ While quick to detect the exaggerated and fantastic features of these accounts, he differed absolutely from the bulk of his fellow-countrymen in the interpretation he placed

¹⁷ Moore, I. 643; Schuyler, p. 337.

¹⁸ The importance of Maury's influence on public opinion in Brazil is freely conceded by the eminent Brazilian historian, Joaquim Nabuco. "After the publication in the *Correio Mercantil* of his [Maury's] memorial, and his description of the Amazon region, locked up from the world by a policy more exclusive than Japan's or Dr. Francia's, the cause of the freedom of navigation was triumphant. Tavares Bastos himself received from the book of Maury the patriotic impulse which converted him into the champion of this great cause." *Um Estadista do Imperio* (Paris, 1897), III. 12.

upon Lieutenant Maury's propaganda. Instead of increasing resentment in the United States by a suicidal policy of exclusion, the Brazilians should, in his judgment, follow the dictates of common sense and enlightened self-interest by throwing open to the world the Amazon Valley whose natural resources he depicted in the most glowing colors. It proved, however, no easy task to allay the resentment caused by Lieutenant Maury's violent and ill-tempered diatribes. The apprehension of the government is clearly revealed by the *paracer* or written opinion prepared at the instance of the Emperor by the Council of State in 1854 and signed by such well-known political leaders and statesmen as the Visconde de Uruguay, the Marquis de Abrantes, and the Visconde de Maranguape. The *paracer* enlarges on the importance and peril of the American propaganda and adds "Lieutenant Maury carries on his campaign with the knowledge and protection of the government of the United States which eagerly welcomes his doctrines. It is his publications which have contributed most to develop and stir up this propaganda".¹⁹ This same note of ill-concealed anxiety appears in the pamphlet of Dr. Moraes Antas, *O Amazonas*, published in Rio de Janeiro in 1854 in answer to Lieutenant Maury's memorial. But neither these official and unofficial expressions of opinion or the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Imperial Government directed against the action of the United States in the Andean Republics discouraged Tavares Bastos. In Parliament and in the press he arraigned the oldtime statesmen of Brazil for their policy of obstruction and obscurantism and ever accused them of fomenting hostility to the United States for their own political ends.

At length his efforts began to bear fruit. He secured the adherence to his cause of no less a personage than Brazil's greatest lyric poet, Gonçalves Dias. In a letter to Bastos the poet somewhat rhetorically writes apropos of Maury:

An author detested in Brazil and even hated by many of our famous men as the advocate of the unbridled ambitions of the Americans, Maury in my judgment should be considered as deserving well [*benemerito*] of

¹⁹ Nabuco, *ut supra*, II. 382.

the Amazon. Even his exaggerations have been of value . . . and from his writings dates the increased interest which the government devotes to the affairs of these provinces. At least it knows that they exist, knows that they belong to us, and will make some effort to develop them, now that they are coveted by the Americans.²⁰

Meanwhile the government began to recede from its unpromising attitude. In his annual report for 1858, the Marquis of Olinda, then Minister of the Interior, stated "that the opening of the Amazon to foreign commerce is continuing to occupy the attention of the government".²¹ The Imperial Parliament devoted increasing attention to the subject. In the session of August 20, 1860, Deputy Tito Franco, representing the Province of Pará, drew a flattering picture of the untouched resources of the Amazon Valley and scored "the policy of Chinese exclusion" to which his native province was subjected.²² And on July 8, 1861, Tavares Bastos himself proposed a law throwing open the river to the navigation of the world and championed it with all the eloquence and influence at his command.²³ Not content with this beginning, the patriotic Brazilians then undertook a series of expository letters designed to educate public opinion on this all-important matter. These *Cartas do Solitario* or "Letters from the Hermit" were presented in the *Correio Mercantil* during the year 1861, and, published in the following year in book form, obtained wide circulation. These letters were supplemented by a series of notable speeches delivered in the Parliament, of which, that of July 8 was considered so important that it was translated *in extenso* in the *New York Journal of Commerce*, for September 16, 1862, and was analyzed in detail in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, for January 20, 1863. This address was a fine piece of impassioned pleading, ending with a dramatic appeal that Brazil take her proper place in the fellowship of the enlightened and progressive nations of the world. Other evidence of the result of Tavares Bastos's labors were not lacking. The

²⁰ A. C. Tavares Bastos, *Cartas do Solitario* (Rio de Janeiro, 1866), p. 274.

²¹ *Relatorio do Ministerio do Imperio*, 1858, p. 58.

²² Tavares Bastos, p. 275.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 275, 414, 415.

Boston Board of Trade at its meeting of July 30, 1862, went on record as unanimously approving his efforts to better the commercial relations between Brazil and the United States; of even greater significance was the recommendations of the president of the Amazon Steam Navigation Company in his annual report for 1863. He announced the willingness of his company to give up its exclusive privileges and urged that the navigation of the Amazon be extended to the flags of all nations.²⁴

Now that the strong initial impulse had been given, the movement in favor of the opening of the Amazon continually gained in momentum. In his annual report submitted to Parliament in 1864, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the government was convinced that it was desirable as soon as possible to permit a greater development of the commerce of the Amazon; it had therefore resolved "to extend the freedom of navigation to the flags of all nations".²⁵ But unexpected obstacles arose when the whole question, in accordance with constitutional usage, was submitted to the Council of State. The opinion of the section dealing with foreign affairs, signed by Pimento Bueno (later Marquis de São Vicente) still represented the ultra-conservative and obstructionist attitude. Grave perils were seen in independent action: "It would be a bad policy for Brazil to isolate herself from the Andean Republics and sacrifice their moral support"; at least action should be deferred until all pending boundary disputes had been settled.²⁶ This was tantamount to shelving the question indefinitely. Such a policy of timidity and procrastination aroused the vigorous opposition of José Antonio Saraiva, then Minister of Marine. This distinguished and broad-minded statesman, one of the ablest parliamentarians of the Empire and later twice Prime Minister, was in favor of the immediate opening of the river. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the Marquis of Olinda, dated February 3, 1866, he wrote: "It is neither consistent nor decorous on the part of Brazil to maintain and defend in the Rio de la Plata principles of liberty and

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

²⁵ *Relatório do Ministério de Relações Exteriores*, 1867.

²⁶ Nabuco, II. 383.

progress which we refuse to admit in the case of our own North. Far from jeopardizing in any manner the interests of Brazil, the opening of the Amazon would greatly redound to her advantage. It is also a matter of simple justice to the Republic drained by the river's headwaters." This letter was accompanied by a decree which opened the waters of the Amazon and its tributaries to merchant ships and war vessels of all nations.²⁷ It is possible that the problem might have been settled at this time, despite the opposition of Pimento Bueno, had not Nabuco de Araujo, the Minister of Justice and Brazil's foremost jurisconsult, disapproved of certain features of the project. He agreed with Saraiva that freedom of navigation should be extended at once to the Amazon proper, but he objected to the opening of the tributaries until adequate port facilities had been provided and satisfactory arrangements made with the Andean Republics. The result was a deadlock; nothing further could be accomplished by the Olinda cabinet.

With the new ministry, that of Zacharias de Goes e Vasconcellos (August 3, 1866), the Amazon question immediately came up for discussion. The time was now more propitious for a definite settlement. During the preceding year, Tavares Bastos had made an extensive journey from one end of the Amazon Valley to the other, and shortly after his return had published an extremely interesting volume entitled *O Valle do Amazonas*.²⁸ With rare charm of style and intense earnestness he depicted the beauties of this virgin country and dwelt at length on the prodigious commercial development which was waiting the unlocking of the valley to the world's trade. Of equal if not greater importance in focusing the attention of the Brazilians on this burning question was the journey of the naturalist Agassiz, also performed in 1865, with the assistance and in a measure under the patronage of the Emperor. Don Pedro himself, keenly jealous of the good name of Brazil, now exerted his influence directly in favor of a prompt and dignified solution of the problem. Zacharias de Goes, the new Prime Minister, was one of the chiefs of

²⁷ *Ibid.*, II. 385.

²⁸ Rio de Janeiro (Garnier), 1866.

the *Progressistas*, the more advanced wing of the Liberal Party, and under his guidance the government was permeated with a more liberal spirit. The change in attitude was strikingly illustrated in the case of Counsellor Pimento Bueno (Marquis de São Vicente). Influenced possibly by the arguments of Tavares Bastos he now abandoned his policy of temporizing, made a complete *volte-face*, and in a project submitted to the Emperor urged the immediate opening of the Amazon. But Don Pedro, scrupulous as ever in his strict adherence to constitutional usage, laid the matter once before the Council of State. A plenary session was held on December 3, 1866; Nabuco de Araujo made an eloquent plea for the immediate opening of the river by imperial decree to both merchant and war vessels. Brazil, he pointed out, by insisting upon the free navigation of the La Plata could not consistently withhold the same privilege for the Amazon; moreover, as a civilized nation, she could not do less than adhere to the principles regarding fluvial navigation embodied in the Treaty of Vienna. Both the main streams as well as the branches should be included in the terms of the decree excepting those tributaries not yet explored or provided with ports. Pimento Bueno was willing to agree to Nabuco's suggestions, provided foreign war ships were excluded from the river. Opposition now virtually disappeared and after some discussion a compromise was reached. Antonio Coelho de Sá e Albuquerque, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, commissioned Nabuco to draw up the final decree which was signed December 7, 1866.²⁹ It provides that after September 7, 1867, the Amazon should be free to the merchant ships of all nations as far as the frontier of Brazil. Of the tributaries the Tapajos was to be open to Santarem, the Madeira to Borbá, and the Rio Negro to Manaos. The Tocantins, which strictly speaking is not a part of the Amazon system, was to be opened to Cametá and the São Francisco, lying entirely outside the Amazon basin, to Penedo. Two years later, on December 17, 1868, Peru followed the example set by Brazil and declared the navigation of her rivers open to all nations. The Amazon,

²⁹ Nabuco, III. 19; the text of the Decree is given in the *Leis do Brazil*, 1866, Decreto, no. 3749, p. 362.

including its most important tributaries, was now free from mouth to headwaters.

While American diplomacy had a share in bringing about this happy result, it is no exaggeration to say that the initial impulse came from the publicity given the Amazon question by the three American naval officers, Lieutenants Herndon, Gibbon, and Maury. As a result of their writings, what was at first sight regarded as a purely domestic affair, became the subject of debate before the forum of public opinion in the United States and Brazil. And while resentment in the latter country seemed for a time to bar the way to any further progress, eventually, through the patriotic efforts of a number of broad-minded Brazilian publicists and statesmen, the objects of American diplomacy and of the propaganda of Lieutenant Maury attained their full and peaceful accomplishment.³⁰

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³⁰ The writer desires to acknowledge the valuable assistance rendered by Mr. Philip H. Cooley in the preparation of this paper.